

FEARLESS – PART 1

-Ryan Parsons-

I think we often underestimate the adventure it is to be called and to follow Jesus. Just the presence of Jesus, matched with the invitation to follow him and the implication of what a “disciple” of Jesus is, invokes a sense of fear (Luke 5:10). One of the most significant barriers to discipleship is fear. Fear can not only skew life’s course, but it can alter identity and/or paralyze an individual or group into inaction (Matthew 25:25). Perhaps, one of Jesus’ greatest desires in his ministry was to empower his disciples in such a way that when confronted with fear, they would become fearless. How could this be accomplished?

How did Jesus love in such a way to propel a rag-tag bunch of disciples, including fishermen and tax collectors, into a fearless force of gospel proclaimers? After years of reflection upon the discipling process that Jesus had bestowed upon him, the Apostle John says that “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:13-21). He seemingly admits that Jesus doesn’t try to mitigate the terror of following him. Rather, his love manifested in his unique presence, teaching, and example cast it out.

Teaching/Mentoring

Jesus’ earliest teaching spoke of the storms of life (Matthew 7:24-27). To prepare his disciples to stand in the terrifying moments of following him, he simply and clearly taught them. Proactive preparation builds leaders who will grow into individuals who respond wisely to challenges rather than fearfully react. It is true love to sacrifice the time to teach to shepherd one’s followers through dangerous and dark valleys. Throughout his ministry, Jesus said things like “Why were you afraid? (Mark 4:40)” and “Do not be afraid” (Mark 6:50). Repeatedly, he challenged their understanding without ignoring the fear (Matthew 8:26). His teaching was brutally honest and hard to follow. At times, fear caused his followers to walk away (John 6:60-71). Yet, those who embraced his love were empowered by Jesus’ teaching and mentoring in amazing ways that forged courageous followers.

Next week we will look at how his loving presence and leadership further developed fearless disciples.

Take some time this week to appreciate the teaching and mentoring that Jesus provides his followers, and let its loving truth cast out any fear you might have.

Hesed,
Ryan